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background notes

India

United States Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs

March 1989

Official Name: Republic of India

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 3,287,263 sq. km. (1,268,884 sq. mi.); about twice the size of Alaska. **Cities** (1988 est.): *Capital*—New Delhi (pop. 7.2 million). *Other major cities*—Calcutta (9.9 million), Bombay (8.7 million), Madras (4.9 million), Bangalore (3.9 million), Hyderabad (2.8 million), Ahmedabad (2.3 million). **Terrain:** Varies from Himalaya Mountains to flat Gangetic Plain. **Climate:** Temperate to subtropical monsoon.

People

Nationality: *Noun and adjective*—Indian(s). **Population** (1988 est.): 817 million; urban 25%. **Annual growth rate:** 2.01%. **Density:** 227 sq. km. (588 sq. mi.). **Ethnic groups:** Indo-Aryan 72%, Dravidian 25%, Mongoloid 2%, others. **Religions:** Hindu 83%, Muslim 11%, Christian 2.6%, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Parsi 2%. **Languages:** Hindi, English, and 14 other official languages. **Education:** *Years compulsory*—9 (to age 14). *Literacy* (1988 est.)—36%. **Health:** *Infant mortality rate* (1986 est.)—90/1,000. *Life expectancy*—55.8 yrs. **Work force** (1987 est.): 300 million. *Agriculture*—70%. *Industry and commerce*—19%. *Services and government*—8%. *Transport and communications*—3%.

Government

Type: Federal republic. **Independence:** August 15, 1947. **Constitution:** January 26, 1950.

Branches: *Executive*—president (chief of state), prime minister (head of government), Council of Ministers (cabinet). *Legislative*—bicameral parliament (*Rajya Sabha* or Council of States and *Lok Sabha* or House of the People). *Judicial*—Supreme Court.

Political parties: Congress (I), Janata Dal, Bharatiya Janata Party, Communist Party of India (CPI), Communist Party of India—Marxist (CPM), numerous regional and small national parties. **Suffrage:** Universal over 21.

Political subdivisions: 25 states, 6 union territories.

Central government budget (1987–88): $50.1 billion.

Defense (1987–88 est.): 3.3% of GNP.

Flag: Saffron, white, and green horizontal bands with a blue spoked wheel in the center. Saffron symbolizes courage and sacrifice; white, peace and truth; green, faith and chivalry; and the spoked wheel, India's ancient culture.

Economy*

GNP: $246 billion. **Real growth rate:** 1.8%. **Per capita GNP:** $313. **Real per capita GNP growth rate:** 0%. **Annual inflation rate:** 7.5% (wholesale); 9.1% (consumer).

Natural resources: Coal, iron ore, manganese, mica, bauxite, chromite, limestone, barite.

Agriculture (40% of GNP): Wheat, rice, coarse grains, oilseeds, sugar, cotton.

Industry: Textiles, jute, processed food, steel, machinery, transport equipment, cement, aluminum, fertilizers.

Trade: *Exports*—$12.1 billion: crude oil, engineering goods, precious stones, cotton apparel and fabrics, handicrafts, tea. *Imports*—$18.5 billion: petroleum, machinery and transport equipment, edible oils, fertilizer. *Major partners*—US, USSR, Japan, UK, Iraq, Iran, France, West Germany.

Official exchange rate (July 1988): 14.00 rupees = US$1.

Fiscal year: April–March 31

Economic aid: *Total*—$47 billion (1951–85): multinational lending agencies and OECD, communist, and OPEC countries. *US aid* (1951–87)—$12.4 billion, of which USAID $4.8 billion, PL–480 $6.8 billion (not including ocean freight and commodities provided through the UN World Food Program), Exim Bank loans $788 million, wheat loans $244 million.

Membership in International Organizations

UN and some of its specialized and related agencies, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank; Nonaligned Movement; Commonwealth; Colombo Plan; Asian Development Bank (ADB); International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); INTELSAT; South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

*All figures are 1987–88 statistics.

(Photos courtesy Frank Bevargua)

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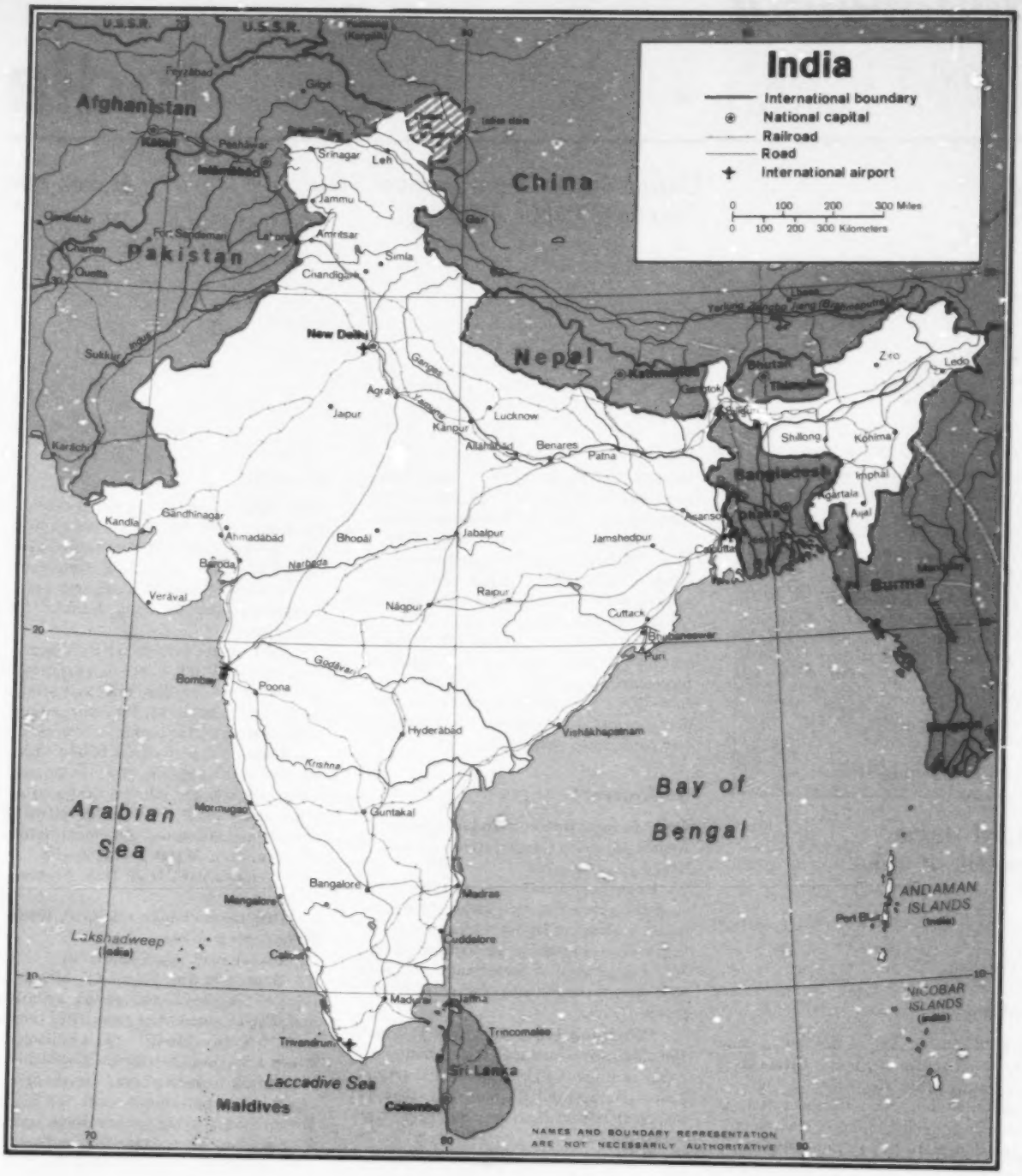
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Madurai
Jaffna
Trincomalee
Trivandrum
Colombo
Shillong
Kohima
Imphal
Gangtok
Thimphu
Kathmandu
Ganges
Yamuna
Narbada
Godavari
Krishna
NAMES AND BOUNDARY REPRESENTATION ARE NOT NECESSARILY AUTHORITATIVE

GEOGRAPHY

India dominates the South Asian subcontinent geographically. It has common borders with Bangladesh, Burma, Pakistan, China, Nepal, and Bhutan; Sri Lanka lies beyond a narrow strait off India's southern tip.

India has three main topographical areas:

- The sparsely populated Himalaya Mountains, extending along much of the northern border;
- The heavily populated Gangetic Plain, a well-watered and fertile area in the north; and
- The peninsula, including the Deccan Plateau, which is generally of moderate elevation.

The climate varies from tropical in the south to temperate in the north, with three well-defined seasons throughout most of the country—the cool season from November to March; a dry, hot season from March to June; and a hot, rainy season during the remainder of the year.

In addition, much of southeastern India is subject to a second rainy period during the cool season. Precipitation ranges from more than 1,000 centimeters (400 in.) annually in the northeast Assam Hills to fewer than 12 centimeters (5 in.) in the northwest Rajasthan Desert.

PEOPLE

Although India occupies only 2.4% of the world's land area, it supports nearly 15% of the world's population. Only China has a larger population. A large percentage of India's population is in its teens—40% of Indians are younger than 15 years old. About 80% of the people live in more than 550,000 villages, and the remainder in more than 200 towns and cities.

Northern India has been invaded from the Iranian plateau, Central Asia, Arabia, and Afghanistan at various times in its ancient and pre-modern history. The blood and culture of these invaders have mixed freely with that of the indigenous people, contributing to an unparalleled degree of racial and cultural synthesis. Religion, caste, and language are major determinants of social and political organization in India today. Sixteen officially recognized languages are spoken in India; Hindi is the most widely spoken.

Although 83% of the people are Hindu, India also is the home of more than 80 million Muslims, giving it one of the world's largest Muslim populations. Adherents to other religions include Christians, Jews, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, and Parsis.

The caste system, comprising the traditional social categories of Indian society, has been historically based on occupation-related categories ranked in a theoretically defined hierarchy. Traditionally, four castes were identified, plus a category of outcastes or untouchables. In reality, however, there are thousands of subcastes, and it is with these subcastes that the majority of Hindus identify. Despite economic modernization and laws countering discrimination against the lower end of the class structure, the caste system remains an important factor in Indian society.

HISTORY

The people of India have had a continuous civilization since 2500 B.C., when the inhabitants of the Indus River Valley developed an urban culture based on commerce and sustained by surplus agriculture. This civilization declined around 1500 B.C., probably due to ecological changes.

During the second millenium B.C., pastoral, Aryan-speaking tribes migrated across the Himalayas into the subcontinent. As they settled in the middle Ganges Valley, they adapted to the cultures that had preceded them.

The political map of ancient and medieval India was made up of a myriad of kingdoms with fluctuating boundaries. In the 4th and 5th centuries A.D., Northern India was unified under the Gupta Dynasty. During this period, known as India's Golden Age, Hindu culture and political administration reached new heights.

Islam entered the subcontinent over a period of 500 years. In the 10th and 11th centuries, Turks and Afghans invaded India and established sultanates in Delhi. In the early 16th century descendants of Genghis Khan swept across the Khyber Pass and established the Mughal (Mogul) Dynasty, which would last 200 years. From the 11th to the 15th centuries, southern India was dominated by the Hindu Chola and Vijayanagar dynasties. During this time, the two systems—the prevailing Hindu and the Muslim—mingled, leaving lasting cultural influences on each other.

The first British outpost in South Asia was established in 1619, at Surat on the northwestern coast of India. Later in the century, the East India Company opened permanent trading stations at Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta, each under the protection of native rulers. The British gradually expanded their influence from these footholds, until, by the 1850s, they controlled almost the entire area of present-day India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. In 1857, a rebellion in north India led by mutinous Indian soldiers caused the British parliament to transfer all political power from the East India Company to the Crown. From then until independence in 1947, Great Britain administered most of India directly and controlled the rest through treaties with local rulers.

Beginning in 1920, Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi transformed the Indian National Congress into a mass movement and used it to mount a popular campaign against British colonial rule. The Congress used both parliamentary and extraparliamentary means—nonviolent resistance and noncooperation—to seek its goal.

Independence was achieved on August 15, 1947, and India became a dominion within the Commonwealth of Nations with Jawaharlal Nehru as prime minister. Longstanding frictions between the Hindus and Muslims led the British to create two countries out of British India—India, and Pakistan as the homeland for the Muslims. India's constitution was promulgated on January 26, 1950, when the country became a republic within the Commonwealth.

Prime Minister Nehru governed the nation until his death in May 1964. He was succeeded by Lal Bahadur Shastri, a veteran of the Congress movement. When Shastri died in January 1966, power passed to Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, who was prime minister from 1966 to 1977. In 1975, beset with deepening political and economic problems, Mrs. Gandhi declared a state of emergency, suspending many civil liberties. Seeking a mandate at the polls for her policies, Mrs. Gandhi called for elections in 1977, only to be defeated. Prime Minister Gandhi was replaced by veteran political leader Moraji Desai, who headed the Janata Party, an amalgam of five opposition parties that had united against Mrs. Gandhi and the Congress Party. In 1979, dissension within the Janata

Bullocks-cart driver in Madurai (Tamil-Nadu).

government led to Desai's loss of a majority in the Parliament. He was succeeded as prime minister by Charan Singh, whose interim government set the stage for new elections, which returned Mrs. Gandhi to office in January 1980. Her assassination on October 31, 1984, was followed by the selection of her son, Rajiv Gandhi, as prime minister.

GOVERNMENT

According to its constitution, India is a "sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic." Like the United States, India has a federal form of government. However, the central government in India has greater power in relation to its states, and government is patterned after the British parliamentary system.

The government exercises its broad administrative powers in the name of the president, whose duties are largely ceremonial. The president and vice president are elected indirectly for 5-year terms by a special electoral college. Their terms are staggered, and the vice president does not automatically succeed to the presidency following the death or removal from office of the president.

Real national executive power is centered in the Council of Ministers (cabinet), led by the prime minister. The president appoints the prime minister, who is designated by legislators of the political party, or coalition of parties, commanding a parliamentary majority. The president then appoints subordinate ministers on the advice of the prime minister.

India's bicameral parliament consists of the Rajya Sabha (Council of States) and the Lok Sabha (House of People). The Council of Ministers is responsible to the Lok Sabha.

The legislatures of the states and union territories elect 232 members to the Rajya Sabha, and the president appoints another 12. The elected members of the Rajya Sabha serve 6-year terms, with one-third up for election every 2 years. The Lok Sabha consists of 544 members; 542 are directly elected to 5-year terms. The other two are appointed.

India's independent judicial system began under the British, and its concepts and procedures resemble those of Anglo-Saxon countries. The Supreme Court consists of a chief justice and 25 other justices, all appointed by the president on the advice of the prime minister.

India has 25 states and 6 union territories. At the state level, some of the legislatures are bicameral, patterned after the two houses of the national parliament. The states' chief ministers are responsible to the legislatures in the same way the prime minister is responsible to parliament.

Each state also has a governor, appointed by the president, who has ceremonial powers in normal times but who assumes certain broad powers during any period of breakdown of state parliamentary government. The central government exerts greater control over the union territories than over the states, although some territories have gained more power to administer their own affairs.

Local governments in India have less autonomy than their counterparts in the United States. Some states are implementing a policy of revitalizing the traditional village councils or "panchayats," and introducing "grassroots democracy" at the village level, where 80% of the people live.

Principal Government Officials

President—R. Venkataraman
Vice President—Shanker Dayal Sharma

*Council of Ministers**
Prime Minister—Rajiv Gandhi
Agriculture—Bhajan Lal
Commerce—Dinesh Singh
Communications—Vir Bahadur Singh
Defense—K.C. Pant
Energy—Vasant Sathe
Environment and Forests—Z.R. Ansari
External Affairs—P.V. Narasimha Rao
Finance—S.B. Chavan
Health and Family Welfare—Motilal Vora
Home Affairs—Buta Singh
Human Resource Development—P. Shiv Shankar
Industry—J. Vengala Rao
Labor—Bindeshwari Dubey
Parliamentary Affairs—H.K.L. Bhagat
Planning and Program Implementation—Madhav Sinh Solanki
Steel and Mines—M.L. Fotedar
Textiles—Ram Niwas Mirdha
Urban Development; Tourism—Mohsina Kidwai
Water and Resources; Law and Justice—B. Shankaranand

Major Cabinet Portfolios Held by Prime Minister
Atomic Energy
Science and Technology
Space

Ambassador to the United States—P.K. Kaul
Ambassador to the United Nations—C.R. Gharekhan

India maintains an embassy in the United States at 2107 Massachusetts Avenue NW., Washington, D.C. 20008 (tel. 202-939-7000) and consulates general in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The Congress Party has ruled India since independence, with the exception of the 1977–79 period of Janata Party rule. Swept into office on an anti-Indira Gandhi wave that was in large part a product of the emergency (1975–77), the Janata Party unraveled in July 1979 after months of dispute over party structure and discord among party leaders. Subsequent efforts by opposition parties to unite against the Congress (I) Party have had little success.

Promising a government that works, Mrs. Gandhi and her son, Sanjay, staged a remarkable political come-

*As of Feb. 1989.

back in 1980, leading Congress (I) to an overwhelming victory, first in the parliamentary elections and later in 14 of the 22 state assembly elections. A year after Sanjay Gandhi's death in a June 1980 plane accident, Mrs. Gandhi's elder son, Rajiv, was persuaded to enter politics and was elected to his brother's parliamentary seat in Uttar Pradesh by a wide margin.

Leadership of the Congress (I) and the nation fell to Rajiv when Mrs. Gandhi was assassinated on October 31, 1984. Seven weeks later, Rajiv led Congress (I) to a resounding victory in national elections, capturing 401 of the 508 parliamentary seats that were contested. Sympathy for Mrs. Gandhi and failure of the major opposition parties to unite against Congress (I) were contributing factors in the landslide: another key factor was Rajiv's ability to inspire younger voters with his pledges to promote efficiency and honesty in government.

The young prime minister inherited numerous problems stemming from the growth of communal violence and the demands of regional parties that the central government cede more authority to the states. The most serious of these problems is in Punjab where some Sikhs have agitated for a separate Sikh state. In June 1984, the Indian Army was deployed against armed Sikh militants who had barricaded themselves in the Golden Temple in Amritsar. The extremists had used the temple for months as a sanctuary from which they directed terrorist attacks against politicians, government officials, and police, both Hindu and Sikh. Mrs. Gandhi's assassins claimed their act was in revenge for the attack on the Golden Temple. The assassination was followed by anti-Sikh violence in New Delhi and some other northern cities. Sikh terrorism and the government's inability to implement political and economic policies acceptable to moderate Sikhs have further complicated efforts to resolve the Punjab situation in a manner that preserves the integrity of Indian federalism.

In mid-1986 and 1987, Prime Minister Gandhi's Congress Party was defeated by regionally based parties in state elections in Kerala, West Bengal, and Haryana, although these setbacks did not affect Congress' commanding majority in parliament. Congress' weakened position in Indian politics was attributed to its inability to resolve the Punjab crisis, allegations of corruption within the party and government, and a string of resignations and dismissals of key officials.

Political Parties

Congress (I) ("I" for Indira) led by Rajiv Gandhi governs nationally and, as of mid-1988, controlled fewer than one-half of the state assemblies.

The Janata Party is one of the three major remnants of the Janata government that broke up in July 1979. In May 1988, it merged with the Lok Dal (A) led by former Prime Minister Charan Singh's son, Ajit Singh, who later became president of the Janata Party. Janata is an amalgamation of splinter groups including populist, socialist, and business interests.

The other section of the Lok Dal party, Lok Dal (B), is led by H.K. Bahuguna and Haryana Chief Minister Devi Lal. In late 1988, this faction announced its intention to merge with the Janata Party to form a new party, the Janata Dal. Both parts of the Lok Dal party draw most of their support from rural areas in the Hindi belt states.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is the third spin-off from the former Janata coalition and is led by Lal Krishna Advani. Descending from the earlier, urban Hindu-oriented Jana Sangh Party and representing the conservative right in the political spectrum, the BJP has attempted to broaden its base to attract non-Hindus and rural groups.

India has two important communist parties—the pro-Soviet Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India—Marxist (CPM), which broke with CPI in 1964 and is essentially independent. Both parties join in the parliamentary process, and the CPM currently holds power in West Bengal and Kerala. There also are small, leftist splinter groups, some advocating violent overthrow of the government.

Regional parties based on ethnic or linguistic elements are significant in India and govern in three states. One of the most important is the Telegu Desam Party which forms the largest opposition block (30 seats) in Parliament. Party leader N.T. Rama Rao is chief minister of Andhra Pradesh. Other important regional parties include the National Conference headed by Farooq Abdullah in Jammu and Kashmir, and the ruling party in Tamil Nadu, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). Some northeastern states are governed by tribal-based parties.

Travel Notes

Climate and clothing: Summer clothing is suitable year round in the south. In the north, lightweight woolens are necessary from mid-December to mid-February.

Customs and currency: US citizens must have a valid visa sufficient for the number of entries and the length of stay desired. Foreign currency (including travelers checks) must be declared to customs on arrival if more than $1,000 but is not otherwise restricted. Import and export of Indian currency are prohibited.

Health: Tapwater is unsafe throughout India. In hotels and restaurants, drink only bottled or carbonated water and avoid ice cubes. Typhoid, tetanus, hepatitis, and diphtheria shots are recommended. Health requirements change; check with your local public health service.

Telecommunications: Telephone service within India and to international points can be irregular and slow. Telegraph service tends to be unreliable. India is 10½ hours ahead of eastern standard time.

Transportation: Many international carriers provide service to New Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras. Indian Airlines has flights to many Indian cities. The railway system provides service throughout the country. The 1,450-km. (900-mi.) trip from Delhi to Calcutta or Bombay takes from 16 to 24 hours. The 2,470-km. (1,535-mi.) trip from Delhi to Madras takes about 40 hours. It is possible to travel nearly everywhere by road during the dry season; however, outside urban areas, the roads are narrow and often impassable during the monsoon. Local transportation includes buses, taxis, three-wheeled scooters, cycle rickshaws, and horsedrawn tongas. Buses are overcrowded and service is irregular. Taxis are plentiful in the larger cities.

ECONOMY

India has made considerable economic progress since independence. A relatively sophisticated industrial base and a large pool of skilled labor have been created. However, agriculture remains the crucial sector—influenced significantly by monsoons, depended upon by 70% of the people, and contributing about 40% of gross national product (GNP). During 1987–88, the economy exhibited surprising resistance to the worst drought of the century and the third successive failure of the monsoon.

Although only modest gains in per capita GNP have been achieved, the GNP has been growing at an average rate of 4.5% in the 1980s, significantly above the 3.5% postindependence real

growth per year. The population, estimated at 685 million in 1981, has been increasing in recent years by more than 2% per year and probably exceeded 817 million by the end of 1988.

Agricultural production has been increasing at an average annual rate of around 3%. There was a surge in production in the late 1960s and early 1970s because of the "green revolution," which made India basically self-sufficent in grain production through the use of hybrid seeds, irrigation, and fertilizer. However, the failed 1987 monsoon and severe drought conditions sent food grain production down by 10%, cutting stocks to 10 million metric tons in mid-1988. The 1988 monsoon season was especially good, however, and last year's harvest was excellent.

Cotton and jute textile production continues to be the most important industry, but public-sector output in steel, machine tools, electric and transport machinery, and chemicals has become important since 1960. India manufactures a wide range of finished products for domestic use and export. Substantial mineral resources—coal, iron ore, bauxite, and manganese—have been partially exploited. Despite industrial development, unemployment, low productivity, high costs of industrial products, and bottlenecks in power, transportation and communications continue to remain major problems. India has had no significant oil discoveries in the last 5 years to supplement the offshore Bombay High Field, and no new oil fields are expected to compensate for rapidly falling reserves. Consumption, however, will continue to rise and India's oil import bill will increase in the forseeable future. Gradual deregulation of industry and trade is providing increased incentives for foreign investors. The Indian Government is encouraging collaborations involving the transfer of high technology.

Foreign Trade and Assistance

India's foreign trade in 1987–88 was estimated at about $30.5 billion, accounting for a relatively small share of GNP. India's trade deficit fell somewhat to $6.4 billion in 1987–88. Imports rose by 11.2%; they were moderated by reduced crude petroleum prices on world markets and diminished fertilizer imports in the face of more than adequate current production. Total exports in 1987–88 increased by 19.5% in current rupee value; exports of primary products such as coffee, cashews, and marine products performed well, despite reduced tea and iron ore exports. Manufactured exports have performed better than total exports, largely because of growth in gems and jewelry, chemicals, leather, engineering goods, and, since 1981–82, garments. This success reflects the impact of promotional measures in these areas, as the Indian Government has sought to encourage exports and liberalize access to imported inputs for exportable products.

The United States is India's largest trading partner. In 1988, bilateral trade was more than $5 billion, up from $4.2 billion in 1987.

Foreign assistance authorized since 1947 has amounted to more than $54 billion. The most important donor has been the World Bank group (with aid to India totaling $26 billion). The United States has provided about $12 billion to India in various types of bilateral aid, aside from aid supplied through multinational lending agencies. In recent years, the U.S. Agency for International Development program has emphasized agricultural research, rural development, health, and family planning.

India's foreign-exchange reserves improved in recent years due to remittances of Indians working abroad, sharp declines in oil and food imports, and growing expenditures by foreign tourists. India's total external reserves on March 31, 1988, were $6.3 billion—equivalent to about 4 months of imports. There has been a marked rise in India's total foreign debt, which reached a level of $44 billion (annual debt service of $5.1 billion) in 1987–88.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Since independence, India has been active in the United Nations as a leader of developing nations. In past years, India made important contributions to UN peacekeeping operations in Korea, the Gaza Strip, the Congo, and Cyprus. In addition, India led the international control commissions established in Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia under the 1954 and 1962 Geneva agreements.

India's role in world affairs has derived from its size and population and the personal influence of Jawaharlal Nehru, a chief architect of the Nonaligned Movement. India assumed even more importance in the movement during 1983–86, when it held the chairmanship. The influence of India's broadening industrial base, military strength, and growing scientific and technical capacity have added to its prominence in international affairs. India also has had an important voice in international economic issues.

South Asia

Pakistan. India's relations with Pakistan have been troubled by the centuries-old rivalry between the Hindus and Muslims of the subcontinent, a situation that led to partition of British India in 1947. The principal point of dispute has been Kashmir: the Hindu maharaja chose to join India, although most of his subjects were Muslim. India maintains that this decision and subsequent elections in Kashmir have made it an integral part of India. Pakistan has asserted Kashmir's right to self-determination through plebescite in accordance with an earlier Indian pledge and a UN resolution. The dispute triggered open warfare between the two countries in 1947–48 and in 1965.

In December 1971, following the crisis in what was then East Pakistan and the flight of millions of Bengali refugees to India, Pakistan and India again went to war. India invaded East Pakistan to aid the resistance to the Pakistan military rulers. The brief conflict left the situation largely unaltered in the west, where the two armies reached an impasse, but a decisive Indian victory in the east supported the successful Bengali revolt and resulted in the creation of Bangladesh.

Since the 1971 war, Pakistan and India have moved slowly toward normalization of relations. In July 1972, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Pakistani President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto met in the Indian city of Simla. They signed the Simla agreement, which calls for peacefully resolving, through bilateral negotiations, the problems resulting from the war and seeks to establish a more stable basis for peace in the region. Diplomatic and trade relations were re-established in 1976.

With the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, new strains appeared in Indian-Pakistan relations; Pakistan supported the resistance, while India implicitly supported the Soviet occupation. In the following 8 years, India voiced increasing concern over Pakistani arms purchases, U.S.military aid to Pakistan, and a Pakistani nuclear weapons program. In an effort to curtail tensions, the two countries formed a joint commission, with subcommissions to consider subjects such as trade, tourism, visas, and cultural exchange. In December 1988, Prime Minister Gandhi met with Pakistan's newly

elected prime minister, Benazir Bhutto in Islamabad. The two leaders agreed to conclude a pact not to attack each other's nuclear facilities. Agreements on cultural exchanges and civil aviation also were initialed during the summit. Bilateral tensions still exist, and Indians maintain that the 1981 security and economic aid relationship between the United States and Pakistan increases the threat from Pakistan. The United States strongly supports the efforts of India and Pakistan to improve their bilateral relations.

Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, bilateral differences persist concerning border demarcation, conflicting claims in the Bay of Bengal, illegal Bangladeshi immigration into India, and important questions of sharing and augmenting Ganges River water. Discussions have been held between the Indian and Bangladeshi Governments on an agreement to take the place of the 1977 watersharing agreement, which has been extended annually since 1985. So far, no progress has been made.

Sri Lanka. Recently, India has become greatly involved in Sri Lanka's domestic conflict between the central government and the Tamil militants demanding a separate state in the northern and eastern provinces. Increased communal violence since 1983 prompted Indian mediation. In July 1987, Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayewardene negotiated a peace accord, which provided for the devolution of some governmental power to the provinces and for the introduction of an Indian peacekeeping force into troubled areas of Sri Lanka in August 1987.

SAARC. Indian relations within the subcontinent also are conducted through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), an organization comprised of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Established in 1985, SAARC encourages cooperation in agriculture, rural development, science and technology, culture, health and population control, narcotics, and terrorism.

China

After independence, India initially enjoyed cordial relations with the new communist government in Beijing, China. However, tension arising from the disputed northern Indian border led to military conflict in 1962. After a month of fighting, in which Chinese forces penetrated deep into Indian-claimed territory, China proclaimed a cease-fire and generally withdrew to positions held before the outbreak of hostilities, except in the Ladakh area of Kashmir.

Houseboats on Lake Dal in Kashmir.

Sino-Indian relations have not recovered from that experience. The border dispute that provoked the war remains unsettled. Since that conflict, China has maintained close relations with Pakistan. Once Sino-Soviet differences surfaced in the 1960s, India's friendly relations with the Soviet Union proved a further obstacle. China and India nevertheless have moved cautiously toward normalization of relations. In 1976, they exchanged ambassadors for the first time since the border war and the following year reopened trade and shipping links. India's foreign minister visited Beijing in 1979, and China's foreign minister returned the visit in 1981.

Bilateral tensions increased in 1986–87 due to differences along the disputed border area east of Bhutan, followed by some troop buildup in the area. Both sides, however, have reiterated their desire to resolve their territorial dispute through a negotiated settlement. In December 1988, Prime Minister Gandhi traveled to Beijing, where he was cordially received by the Chinese leaders. This summit meeting was the first in over 30 years, and symbolized the renewed effort to reduce tensions between the world's two most populous nations.

Soviet Union

Since the early 1950s, India and the Soviet Union have built a strong relationship based on Soviet support for India's position in the Kashmir dispute, Soviet economic and military assistance, and, after 1962, their common mistrust of China. Both parties have profited from a "rupees for rubles" trade relationship permitting them to import goods without spending hard currency. In August 1971, just prior to the Indian move to support the Bengali resistance in East Pakistan, the two countries signed a 20-year Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation, giving India important superpower support for its position in the coming Bangladesh crisis. India views the Soviet Union as a reliable support in times of trouble.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, an act that drew sharp reproach from most nonaligned countries, did not alter India's view of Soviet policy appreciably. India became active in late 1987 in counseling the Gorbachev leadership to withdraw and welcomed Soviet commitment of withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1988.

General Secretary Gorbachev visited India in November 1988 and promised greater cooperation in economic and scientific relations. During Gandhi's July 1987 visit to Moscow, the Prime Minister inaugurated a Festival of India in the Soviet Union. The Soviets produced their own nationwide festival in India in 1987–88.

DEFENSE

Supreme command of India's Armed Forces—the fourth largest in the world—rests with the president. However, actual responsibility for national defense lies with the Cabinet Committee for Political Affairs, under the chairmanship of the prime minister.

The minister of defense is responsible to parliament for all defense service matters. India's military command structure has no joint defense staff or unified command apparatus. The Ministry of Defense provides administrative and operational control over the three services through their respective chiefs of staff. The armed forces are loyal to constitutional authority and have maintained a longstanding tradition of noninvolvement in political affairs.

The principal strengths of the armed forces include an immense reservoir of available manpower; a high state of combat readiness; professional training; and the considerable fighting qualities, discipline, and *esprit de corps* of its members. Perhaps the military's most significant weakness is the diversity of equipment in the three services' inventories, resulting in various maintenance, spare parts replacement, and training problems. Although some progress has been made in achieving its goal of self-sufficiency in armaments production, India will continue to rely on foreign suppliers for major weapon systems for the foreseeable future.

Although the Soviet Union remains its primary external source for arms, India continues to show increasing interest in the selective purchase of sophisticated Western weapons systems. In pursuing the goal of eventual self-reliance in armaments production, India has sought the collaboration, not only of the Soviets but also of West European countries and the United States in increasing its technological sophistication and production capabilities.

U.S.-INDIA RELATIONS

The United States and India aim at cordial relations reflecting their common ideals of democracy and freedom. Framers of the Indian constitution studied the American system and grafted some of its features onto India's essentially parliamentary form of government. The United States is India's largest trading partner and has been an important source of foreign economic assistance.

The United States seeks a productive, steadily broadening relationship with India. Recent high-level visits have increased understanding and cooperation. President Reagan and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi met at the Cancun summit in 1981 and again when Mrs. Gandhi visited the United States in 1982 and 1983. Secretary of State Shultz visited India in 1983, and Vice President Bush in 1984. Defense Secretaries Weinberger and Carlucci visited in 1985 and 1988, respectively, to pursue U.S. interest in a broader defense relationship. In June 1985, Rajiv Gandhi made an official visit to the United States and inaugurated the year-long Festival of India; he visited again in October 1987. These visits have resulted in improved dialogue on issues where there is disagreement and renewed emphasis on areas where there is room for greater cooperation, such as trade, technology transfer, and scientific exchanges. This steady growth of cooperation in areas essential to Indian development has produced a trust necessary in expanding the overall political relationship. U.S. efforts to prevent Sikh terrorists from operating from the United States and opposition to the separatist "Khalistan" movement in Punjab have underscored U.S. support for India's unity and territorial integrity.

Principal U.S. Officials

Ambassador—John R. Hubbard
Deputy Chief of Mission—R. Grant Smith
Public Affairs—Len Baldyga
Political Affairs—George Sherman
Economic Affairs—Duane C. Butcher
Commercial Affairs—Melvin Searls
Agricultural Affairs—Lyle J. Sebranek
Scientific Affairs—Peter Heydemann
Administrative Affairs—Bert C. Moore
Consular Affairs—Leo Wollemborg
Director, AID Mission—Robert N. Bakley

Consuls General
Bombay—John Eddy
Calcutta—Kenneth Brill
Madras—Thomas Timberman

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Further Information

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